

# LOCAL AUTHORITIES' MIGRANT INTEGRATION GUIDE



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## PREFACE

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is comprised of 57 participating States that have differing experiences in dealing with migration flows, levels of government responsible for migrant integration policies, main countries of immigrant origin, and benefits and challenges associated with migration. Successful migrant integration is key to maximizing the strength, vitality and innovation that migrant populations bring to local communities, thus benefitting society at large. In reality, much of the migrant integration process occurs at the local level. Migrants meet and interact with others, use public services, work, open businesses and study in their new local communities.

This Guide has been developed by the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) as part of its programme on migration and freedom of movement, within which ODIHR undertakes a range of capacity-building and awareness-raising activities with migration stakeholders across the OSCE region. The Guide is part of that work, and has been developed with a view to assist local authorities, with a wide audience in mind, and may be particularly useful for officials in countries that have only recently become receiving, rather than sending countries. It aims to offer an initial overview of key aspects of migrant integration relevant to local authorities to help promote knowledge and encourage further learning and improved policies and practice. By discussing common issues and various policy instruments in the most relevant policy areas for migrant integration at the local level, and by presenting examples of good practices from various OSCE participating states, we hope this Guide will assist local authorities across the OSCE region in their work on migrant integration.

## INTRODUCTION: ACKNOWLEDGING AND EMBRACING A CENTRAL ROLE IN FOSTERING MIGRANT INTEGRATION

Migrant integration is a dynamic, multi-faceted and long-term process aimed at mutual accommodation and acceptance among migrant and host society populations. Integration assumes equal opportunities for migrants in their economic mobility and social, civil, political and cultural inclusion; their active participation in the integration process; and their respect for fundamental norms and values, without having to relinquish their own identity. Migrant integration policies and measures should not be limited to long-term migrants, but should also respond to the needs of those staying for short terms.

The process of migrant integration involves and affects a number of parties: migrants themselves, host governments and their institutions, local governments and their institutions, and the local receiving community, as well as communities of origin, to name just the most significant. While in many countries across the OSCE region integration policies are formulated at the national level, they are mainly implemented through local administrative and public institutions. Local authorities, even when not directly tasked with migrant integration, can do a lot to assist this process, and cities increasingly have their own approaches to migrant integration.

Actively engaging in the migrant integration process does not mean that local authorities need to do everything on their own. There are a number of possible partners, including local migrant organizations, mainstream civil society organizations, local media, public institutions and private businesses that can contribute to the process. Local authorities' potential tasks may include, but are not limited to:

- initiating or giving impetus to migrant integration initiatives;
- co-ordinating and facilitating integration measures;
- providing space for activities;
- putting people from different communities in contact with each other; and

- putting people in touch with relevant organizations that might be able to help address their needs.

There are many **types of migrant integration policies and actions**. It is helpful to distinguish between those that target institutions and those that target populations (both migrant and local populations). In terms of **institutions**, there are three main types of activities:

- establishing migrant-targeted measures to facilitate the initial stages of integration (civic orientation, arrival information and learning the host society's national language/s);
- establishing co-ordination entities in order to harmonize and streamline integration activities and services provided to migrants; and
- helping mainstream institutions adapt so that they can serve migrant populations' needs on equal terms with the local population's needs (training staff, providing translation and multilingual services, etc.).

In terms of working with **communities**, there are two broad types of activities local authorities and other stakeholders can engage in, depending upon the target groups:

- equipping migrants with the skills necessary to function in their new society (language and civic orientation, gaining equal access to skills development and capacity building); and
- informing, educating and supporting the local population to deal with and benefit from changes in their national and local communities resulting from migration.

Migrant integration policy frameworks cut across many policy areas, including access to the labour market, to health and social services, and to education for children and adults. This Guide focuses on what local authorities can do to promote migrant integration at the local level and gives ideas and good practices in the following sections on how to:

- ✓ Provide civic orientation and national-language teaching;
- ✓ Ensure equal access to public goods and services, including:
  - education,
  - health care,

- employment and entrepreneurship,
  - social care,
  - housing, and
  - natural and man-made crisis management;
- ✓ Promote good community relations and combat intolerance, discrimination and hate crimes;
  - ✓ Regularly monitor the local context in terms of opportunities and challenges resulting from migration flows; and
  - ✓ Ensure communication, co-ordination and collaboration among stakeholders.

## PROVIDING CIVIC ORIENTATION AND NATIONAL-LANGUAGE TEACHING

Civic orientation is intended to help migrants know more about their host countries and their societies. Even if national legislation does not provide information or training for integration tests, it is possible to introduce programmes at the local level that provide cultural, historical and civic knowledge to help migrants adapt to their host society. These programmes often benefit from co-operation with schools, universities and civil society organizations. If passing integration tests is obligatory, local authorities should consider organizing special courses to help migrants prepare for them, either for a small fee or for free.

Welcome packs are a good way to provide information to new residents. These packs can contain information on daily life (education, childcare, medical services, housing, legal advice, social and community services, transport, banking and personal finance and safety), work (legal employment, finding work, self-employment, and membership in professional organizations and trade unions), and enjoying their new places of residence (community and cultural centres, local pro-migrant organizations, festivals, local places of interest, galleries, museums and local media).

The **book *About Sweden*** was co-developed by the City of Gothenburg and Västra Götaland's County Administrative Board. This book is divided into several chapters and contains information about coming to Sweden, living in Sweden, working and studying in Sweden, migrants' rights and obligations, building a family and living with children, civic and political participation, Sweden's health system, and care for senior people. The book is available in 12 languages: Arabic, Dari, English, French, Persian, Russian, Spanish, Somali, Sorani, Swedish, Thai and Tigrinya.

Source: <https://www.informationsverige.se/Engelska/Samhalle/Pages/Boken-Om-Sverige-p%C3%A5-flera-spr%C3%A5k.aspx>

Such information may also be made publically available through dedicated websites linked to local authorities' websites, as well as other relevant



websites maintained by public institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), employment agencies and countries of origin. Another option is to open an info-line operating in several languages, particularly those languages most relevant to the migrant population's profile.

A dedicated migrant information centre, possibly run in co-operation with civil society organizations or local public institutions, such as libraries, is another possible way to make sure migrants have access to information and advice on living and working in their new place. Such centres may employ people with experience or knowledge about immigration history and issues, and who also know the way of life and regulations of the receiving country and who are culturally sensitive and have relevant language skills.

**Integration Centre Prague** is a public service organization founded by the Magistrate of the City of Prague. It provides space where migrants can meet, learn, communicate and receive free and quality information. The Integration Centre offers free legal counselling services and help from intercultural assistants, as well as free Czech language courses for beginners, intermediate and advanced students, including specially designed courses for parents with young children (with free babysitting). The Centre organizes educational seminars and integration events. The information on the web-page is available in Arabic, Czech, English, Mongolian, Russian, Ukrainian and Vietnamese.

Source: <http://www.icpraha.com/en/vzdelavaci-seminare/>

Affordable or free-of-charge language courses available for employed people, i.e., offering classes in the evenings or over weekends, are needed to help migrants learn the host community's language and become more self-reliant and comfortable in their new country. Local authorities may co-operate with language schools, NGOs, regular schools, community centres and/or libraries in organizing such courses. In some cities, schools and kindergartens also offer language courses for stay-at-home migrant parents during their children's classes.

## ENSURING EQUAL ACCESS TO PUBLIC GOODS AND SERVICES

Local authorities also have a role in preventing discrimination against migrants in terms of their access to public services and funds to which they are entitled. There are several main policy measures that exist to ensure access to public services provided by local authorities and institutions, as well as the general social inclusion of migrants. First of all, information on accessing services and engaging in redress mechanisms in cases where migrants' rights are violated need to be accessible and provided in relevant languages. Secondly, officials and front desk officers at public institutions need to be trained on the local migration context, intercultural awareness and entitlements for different migrant groups. This training can be organized by local authorities in co-operation with international institutions and civil society organizations. If possible, interpretation services should be available, particularly bearing in mind the needs of recent migrants. Finally, local public institutions should take proactive outreach measures to increase the share of their employees of migrant origin.

### **EDUCATION**

Local authorities should ensure that local residents of migrant origin with children are informed about education and schools obligations, as well as the school system in general, and make sure migrants have equal access to education, including early childhood education. It is also crucial that school authorities do not feel left alone with new challenges of integrating migrant children, and that they receive support from relevant institutions, including local authorities.

Migrant children, in particular, will benefit greatly from pre-school education. It is important to raise awareness among migrant parents about the benefits of early childhood education and the existing preschool education options. Some countries have introduced fee exemptions or reductions for low-income families, thereby expanding the public pre-school education system.

Many children may find adapting to new cultural and linguistic environments challenging. One way to make the adaptation process as smooth as possible is to introduce adaptation periods, during which migrant children receive additional host country language classes and are not evaluated on school subjects, but rather on individual progress. In cases where there are large numbers of migrant children, possible transition measures can include opening separate reception classes that focus on learning the host country's language, adaptation and making up for possible knowledge gaps. These reception classes could be combined with regular classes at school (e.g., three days of reception classes and two days of regular school classes per week). Research also shows that language learning should be integrated into the curriculum; thus, it is not necessary to wait for migrant students to fully master the new national language in order to teach the main curriculum. Migrant students should join mainstream classes as soon as possible.

Local educational authorities, in co-operation with partner institutions, can organize training for school directors and prepare activity plans or programmes aimed at ensuring that the whole school benefits from its student diversity. Schoolteachers also need to be trained in intercultural awareness, working with students from diverse cultural backgrounds, preventing bias-motivated bullying and preventing hate crimes at school. Intercultural assistants or resource people can be hired by schools to help migrant children. Depending upon the linguistic and cultural context, migrant children's needs and available resources, schools could consider hiring professional intercultural mediators or inviting help from volunteers from community groups of the same migrant background or from children's family members.

Parental involvement is important for children's success at school, and schools are often important channels for the social integration of migrant families as a whole. Effective communication between parents and schools is crucial. Linguistic barriers can be overcome by publishing information on the school website in the migrant children's native language or by using interpreters and/or resource people who not only assist the students, but can also be responsible for liaising between their families and the school. Local authorities could develop a database of interpreters and intercultural assistants that schools may contact, as well as organizations to fund these services. It is also worth encouraging the involvement of migrant parents

in school life in a more general sense, inviting them to contribute to organizing school events along with other parents, to sit on parent boards, etc.

Some schools may attract a considerably larger number of migrant children than others. This may have to do with residential separation of people with migrant backgrounds, as well as limited school choice due to school recruitment based on student performance. Desegregation and maintaining balance between host country and migrant children in all schools may be achieved by encouraging migrant parents to apply to a different school after a certain number or percentage of children of migrant background at a given school has been reached, as well as by attracting mainstream students to schools with higher proportions of migrant students. It is important to clearly explain the reasons for such steps.

In Denmark, the Copenhagen city authorities introduced the **Copenhagen Model of Integration**, aimed at reducing segregation in the city's schools. In order to attract migrant students, schools with a predominately non-migrant student population trained teachers and employed integration specialists and translators. Schools with a considerable percentage of migrant students conducted publicity campaigns and co-operated with kindergartens in order to attract more Danish students.

Source: [https://www.wib-potsdam.de/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Immigrant\\_Students\\_at\\_Schools.pdf](https://www.wib-potsdam.de/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Immigrant_Students_at_Schools.pdf)

Depending upon the funding system for public schools, it may also be possible to introduce financial incentives for popular, oversubscribed schools to admit migrant students, e.g., by subsidizing these schools based on student diversity, or by providing more funding for migrant students in particular. At the same time, in order to attract and retain students from host communities and advantaged families to schools with high ratios of migrant students, it is necessary to guarantee a high quality of education. Local authorities should devote extra resources to such schools in order to recruit highly qualified staff and build the capacity, skills and expertise of teachers working in multi-ethnic and multi-lingual environments.

Local host country students also need help in becoming comfortable with diversity. While designing school curricula usually lies outside the control of local authorities, they may still foster and encourage extracurricular

activities aimed at educating students about migration processes, learning about what migrants contribute to host societies, exploring mutual experiences and prejudices, and fostering intercultural understanding and openness towards cultural diversity. This can be achieved by developing scripts for general education classes, teaching about migrant students' countries, preparing dedicated contests and festivals, and twinning initiatives with schools in the migrant children's countries of origin.

Providing quality after-school care is also an important way of assisting young people's integration. When after-school care is not regularly provided, local authorities may co-operate with schools and NGOs to establish programmes that combine educational and recreational activities for migrant children.

An **after-school programme for migrant children** in Cyprus was co-funded by Nicosia's municipal government. The programme includes educational and recreational activities, support for homework, theatre classes, chess lessons, English lessons, sports activities, outdoor excursions and a bus service to pick children up from school (during the academic year). Lunch and an afternoon snack are also offered. During the academic year, services are offered between 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. and during school vacations between 7:00 a.m. and 6 p.m. During these time periods, migrant parents also have the opportunity to participate in Greek classes and computer classes, and to seek psychological support from specialists.

Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/intpract/multicultural-children-day-care-centre-nicosia?pdf=1>

## HEALTH

The first step to ensuring equal access to public healthcare systems is to provide clear information about how public healthcare systems work, who has access to them, on what basis and what patients' rights are. Local authorities, in co-operation with relevant health institutions, can prepare clear explanatory materials in several languages that can later be made available by local healthcare providers in printed and electronic form, as well as by migrant information points and local NGOs. It is important to ensure that the front-desk personnel at public health providers are well

informed about migrants' entitlements to health services. Health provider staff should also be trained on how to deal with patients coming from different cultural backgrounds.

Language barriers may be one of migrants' biggest challenges in accessing health care provisions. Information about doctors' foreign language skills on clinic websites can help migrant patients choose doctors they can communicate with in a language they speak. Many countries provide multilingual interpretation services, which patients in these countries are able to request when arranging to visit a doctor.

The **Multilingual Emergency Aid** brochure is used at Irish clinics and hospitals to help staff communicate more effectively with patients. Each brochure contains questions and statements covering basic personal information, health problems and patient needs in English and one other language. It is intended for use prior to asking for interpretation services or while waiting for an interpreter to arrive. It is available in 21 languages.

Source: <http://www.hse.ie/eng/about/Who/primarycare/socialinclusion/about-social-inclusion/translation-hub/Multilingual-resources-and-Translated-material/>

Some migrant groups may be more likely to have certain health conditions than the rest of the population. Some might also be at higher risk of mental health problems, due to greater exposure to difficult economic and social conditions or traumatic experiences. It is important to monitor the local situation and train doctors and medical staff about the local migrant population's characteristics. Outreach to migrant groups with information about potential health hazards and disease prevention, including vaccination regimes that may be different to those in their country of origin, is also necessary. Doctors and medical staff should also be able to identify patients who are or have been victims of abuse and take the required courses of action. Pregnancy, perinatal and postnatal health care provisions for migrant women also deserve special attention. Migrant women need to have access to information about how pregnancy and birth are treated in their host country, as well as which health services are available to them.

The Polish Migration Forum produced an **information booklet** in five languages for expectant migrant mothers titled, **“I am a mum in Poland”**. The booklet presents basic information about pregnancy and birth, foetal development and a mother’s health throughout pregnancy. It also includes information about the Polish healthcare system, focusing on pregnancy and infant care. It covers regulations relevant to pregnant women, as well as women in their post-natal period, infant tests and vaccinations. The booklet discusses the possible emotional impact of being pregnant in a foreign country and suggests available coping strategies. Since pregnancy and birth may be treated differently in different countries, this booklet helps migrant mothers understand how these subjects are perceived in Poland.

Source: <http://www.forummigracyjne.org/pl/aktualnosci.php?news=402&wid=34&wai=&year=>

## **EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Economic considerations are crucial for migrant integration. Migrants are one of the most vulnerable groups in the labour market. There are many ways local authorities may assist migrants’ access to employment opportunities and equip them with the skills that local businesses seek.

In order to improve migrant access to local labour markets and increase benefits for host societies, local authorities may conduct training for potential employers, local employment offices and employment agencies regarding migrants’ employment rights and to make sure migrant workers are not discriminated against within the local labour market. It is also possible to initiate company, trade union and chamber of commerce networks and to organize migrant-oriented job fairs.

Local governments may also promote the employment of migrants in the local public sector by introducing internship schemes and employment opportunities for migrants at town halls and local public institutions, and by advertising these positions as “migrant friendly” through migrant organizations and media. Such steps have the additional benefit of helping make these institutions better equipped to deal with cultural diversity.

To help migrants gain the skills necessary to fully benefit from local job market opportunities, in addition to the language courses already mentioned,

local authorities can organize skills training and internship programmes for potential employees, in co-operation with other partners, including chambers of commerce, civil society organizations and trade unions. “De-skilling” (or not recognizing skills) is a problem often confronted by migrants, related not only to language barriers but also to authorities not recognizing foreign diplomas or other qualifications. Foreign diploma recognition is a central government prerogative, yet it is possible to facilitate such processes at the local level by providing clear information about different countries’ regulations, diploma recognition procedures and ensuring opportunities for professional training, e.g., by establishing a local contact point.

Promoting self-employment and business-ownership opportunities for migrants is another route towards economic integration, as well as to greater local and regional economic development. Streamlining regulatory procedures for entrepreneurs, by introducing an “only once” principle (the need to present originals of documents only once) and creating an online one-stop-shop are steps that can benefit the whole business community. It is also possible to open migrant entrepreneurship centres or special units within mainstream entrepreneurship-support institutions that provide holistic support to migrant entrepreneurs, including training, consultancy, advice regarding accessible business spaces and networking opportunities.

The **Vienna Migrant Enterprise Information Centre (MINGO)** is a comprehensive service run by the Vienna Business Agency (WWFF), an agency of the Republic of Austria that reports to the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy. It offers support to small companies, start-up businesses, owner-operated companies and new freelancers. The services include reasonably-priced MINGO office space; free workshops on entrepreneurial issues; basic training, ranging from start-up businesses to establishing and maintaining successful businesses; innovation consulting to develop new business ideas; and free support and personal initial consultations for small and medium-sized enterprises and company founders. MINGO’s services also include support for implementing operational steps to aid growth and innovation; information about support and advice offered by the City of Vienna; support in dealing with agencies and authorities; support in forming links with Vienna’s financial institutions; and multilingual services.

Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/index.cfm?action=media.download&uuid=2AE1EA77-9941-AA17-03E5A49C15E215FF>



Local authorities can also organize training courses to help migrants gain the skills necessary for successful business development, including becoming familiar with local business culture and host country business-language skills. These could include courses on accounting, marketing, economic and financial literacy, business regulations, information and communication technology, recruitment strategies, and writing bankable business plans. In co-operation with relevant partners, local authorities can also help ensure technical assistance and financial opportunities dedicated to migrant entrepreneurs and promote co-operation between migrant and host country entrepreneurs, facilitating access to global markets, or supporting coaching and mentoring schemes.

Migrants often experience difficulties in accessing funding to start or develop their businesses. Local governments can provide microloans, introduce measures to decrease the risk to credit institutions lending money to migrant entrepreneurs (e.g., quality assurance certifications or guarantees for business loans by municipal authorities), and help bridge the gap between potential investors and migrant entrepreneurs.

Another possibility is to introduce or promote diversity and equality principles, techniques for outsourcing strategies and to encourage the participation of companies that have either been established by migrants or which employ a considerable number of them. Finally, ensuring access to childcare and pre-school education is crucial for young migrant parents' employment opportunities, in particular those of mothers.

## **SOCIAL CARE**

Migrants should also have equal access to social services (although eligibility for social benefits may vary depending on their status), including social worker support, access to care homes or shelters and/or financial support provided by local social service institutions for vulnerable people, including those with special needs. The main barriers to their access to social services are similar to those for many public goods and services, and include language problems and lack of information about available services among migrants. Equally, barriers also include prejudice and lack of intercultural communication skills among social services staff, as well as their lack of information on migrant entitlements to different services.

Steps towards ensuring equal access to social services for migrants include interpretation services and translation of relevant materials, including on services, entitlements and application procedures, in the most widely used foreign languages, and education for social workers and other relevant institutions, including shelters and care homes, on administrative and legal procedures, entitlements and immigration contexts in local areas. Education should also cover working with vulnerable people of migrant origin, intercultural awareness and communication and hiring people of migrant origin themselves as part of the social service cadre.

It is also important to clearly inform migrants about host society norms, especially in contexts where adaptation problems may be likely due to cultural differences. In particular, family life norms and perceptions about child-rearing may be culturally specific. It is important to provide clear information to migrant communities regarding local and/or national norms of behaviour and laws that promote them, consequences of their violation and sources of support in case of problems, including domestic violence or problems coping with child behaviour.

The **MONIKA Multicultural Women's Association**, supported by Helsinki's local authorities, provides specialized services for migrant women and their children who have been victims of violence. It acts as an expert group and advocates on issues related to ethnic non-discrimination and violence, and enhances integration by supporting civil society activities for migrants. The Association provides support in several languages and specializes in types of violence that can affect migrant women in particular, such as honour-related violence. The Monika Resource Centre (Voimavarakeskus Monika) provides a low-threshold service with options for receiving anonymous help. Services include psycho-social support, guidance, peer support groups and supported housing. The Association operates the Mona Shelter (Turvakoti Mona), which is located at a secret address and offers services to migrant women and their children from all over the country. MONIKA offers group activities, run in basic Finnish, and individual guidance in developing Finnish social skills and knowledge. The Association also assists migrant women with a history of long-term unemployment to become integrated into working life, develop their skills for the Finnish labour market and advocates for equal opportunities for them in Finnish working life.

Source: <https://monikanaiset.fi/en/>

Selected groups within the migrant population may suffer discrimination on multiple grounds and be more vulnerable to violence, not only by the majority host population, but also by members of their own community. These vulnerable groups may include women, especially live-in workers, children, LGBTI or even religious dissenters. Raising awareness among relevant public sector institutions and voluntary sector organizations about the possible risks faced by these groups and the need to reach out to them will help counteract discrimination. It is also necessary to ensure migrants have access to counselling, emergency shelters and crime reporting, taking into account different migrant groups' particular needs. This is often effectively done by setting up public-private partnerships with civil society partners.

Whenever possible, tailored approaches that take individual migrants' particular situations, needs and experiences into account are welcome and more likely to be successful. Migrant assistants, mentors and/or individual integration plans help address a migrant's individual needs in a step-by-step way, making the integration process smoother and more effective. Social services also see value in engaging people of migrant backgrounds as social workers and contact people, who are then able to facilitate outreach to migrants in need of assistance, as well as make professional contributions to service delivery.

## **HOUSING**

Migrants often lack knowledge of housing-related rights and obligations and face discrimination in the housing market. Local authorities can help migrants by ensuring equal access to housing in the free market, as well as to social housing for those eligible.

Dedicated "one-stop shop" counters within municipal offices or migrant information centres may be established to help people deal with all housing-related issues, including advice and information about the housing market and rights and obligations. They can also include information about where to find rental offers, possibly including a regularly updated list of accommodation advertisements by landlords welcoming to migrants. Information about assistance in cases of discrimination, extortion and other problems should also be offered by migrant information centres.

The **Rome Social Mediation Agency** deals with housing and is made up of three offices located in three of the municipal social service departments. Project operators (social and housing mediators) provide information, advice and guidance to migrants looking for a home. This includes seeking and visiting apartments, checking the requirements needed in order to rent, support with housing/rental contracts, support services to recipients for a period of three months after they lease a property, microcredit consulting, network activities and guidance for local services (such as social secretariats and employment services), and social and housing mediation, including directly within apartment buildings. Training is offered to migrants on tenants' rights and duties, intercultural communication tools, guidance on credit and microcredit and managing the family budget. Training is offered to apartment block administrators on intercultural communication tools, conflict management and negotiation techniques. Training is offered to civil society on tenants' rights and duties and other intercultural communication tools.

Source: <http://www.programmaintegra.it/wp/programma-integra/progetti/progetto-amar-agenzia-di-mediazione-abitativa-di-roma/>

An undersupply of social housing can result in tough competition between low-income locals and migrant population families. Local authorities should provide up-to-date information on the availability of social housing, as well as clear non-discriminatory rules regulating access not only through dedicated resources, but also through sources of information used by migrants. Some local authorities are also able to dedicate some accommodation in sheltered housing for migrant families in difficult situations. In order to increase the overall supply of affordable housing and to promote socially mixed neighbourhoods, local authorities can also enter into partnerships with housing associations by providing municipal land and securing a certain share of accommodation for affordable housing, including housing for migrant families. Local authorities may also consider supporting migrants through affordable homeownership by subsidies, tax-reductions and/or cooperation with local banks with low-interest mortgages.

## **NATURAL AND HUMAN-CAUSED CRISIS MANAGEMENT**

Migrant populations belong to host societies' most vulnerable groups during times of natural or human-caused disasters. It is necessary for local

authorities to take migrant groups' needs and characteristics into account during disaster risk reduction planning and to incorporate key points into major crisis preparedness, planning and management. In order to do this, it is important that local authorities have a clear picture of local migrant populations that goes beyond official statistics and that they regularly monitor changes.

One of the greatest barriers to accessing information relevant to risk and crisis management is language. It is therefore important to translate relevant information resources into migrant populations' languages and to reach out to migrant communities in order to ensure easy access. Local authorities should also consider training volunteers that speak migrant community languages who can later assist migrant populations in case of disasters. Another practice used in some areas is the development of a network of migrant community representatives who can be easily contacted in case of a disaster or emergency and share relevant information with their communities.

A number of countries produce **multilingual guides on disaster response**. For example, the most important documents about hazards in Greece can be downloaded from the Greek civil protection's website in English, Spanish, French and Arabic.

Source: <http://civilprotection.gr/en>

Providing intercultural communication and awareness training to relevant agencies, including regular empirical opportunities to meet and discuss issues with migrant communities' representatives as part of general disaster preparedness, will also better prepare the people delivering emergency and disaster response services to work with diverse communities.

Migrant population representatives should also be included in crisis management strategy preparation to make sure their perspectives and needs are taken into account, e.g., by inviting migrant communities representatives to public consultations regarding strategic crisis documents, or circulating draft strategies to migrant civil society organizations for review. Recruiting staff with migrant or minority backgrounds for professional roles within disaster management agencies will also help to meet migrants' and diverse communities' needs during disasters in a better way.

## PROMOTING GOOD COMMUNITY RELATIONS

### **RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS, COMBATING NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES**

Creating a welcoming climate, raising awareness about the enriching contributions migrants make to society and fostering a shared local identity, irrespective of the residents' places of origin, are essential for promoting successful migrant integration and curbing bias-motivated violence. Local authorities have a wide array of measures relevant for both mainstream and migrant populations at their disposal, including public relations and awareness-raising campaigns, cultural festivals, local fairs and other events that can be planned in co-operation with migrant organizations, local media, community centres, galleries, museums, libraries, schools and universities.

In order to dismantle prejudice and misconceptions, these should first be identified. Effective information and awareness-raising measures are evidence-based, well targeted and tailor-made; that is, they address real concerns or misperceptions actually held by those in host communities. Myth-busting campaigns can help get the facts straight on the local population's different issues of concern regarding migration processes, including potential misperceptions of criminality, un/employment, etc. Local authorities can consider commissioning research institutions to design and conduct opinion polls or information-collection studies, or they may well be able to draw on published research or the work of universities or think-tanks, in order to plan further activities based on their results. Local media also have an important role to play here. Human-interest stories involving migrants in local media can help the local population relate to their community's new members, show real life stories and raise awareness about migrants' positive contributions to the local community.

The **Living and Working Together Development Partnership** information campaign in the city of Linz, Austria, successfully raised the interest of targeted employers, especially small and medium sized enterprises, and local policy-makers to explore the benefits of a cross-border labour market and develop intercultural training for migrant shop stewards and workers.

Source: [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/equal/data/document/etg1-sucliv&work\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/data/document/etg1-sucliv&work_en.pdf)

Local authorities can also facilitate regular contact between host and migrant populations, based on shared interests through channels such as sports clubs, women's organizations, hobby and interest groups or neighbourhood associations, and can contribute to organizing intercultural events. Public spaces, including parks, libraries, community centres and public transportation, typically run by local authorities, are important places for promoting inclusive societies and fostering positive images of immigration and cultural diversity.

The **Library Link** initiative in Simcoe County in Ontario, Canada has established community libraries as welcome hubs to help migrants feel at home, access materials in different languages and find local community information and referral support. The project includes staff training and adding multilingual resources to better support migrant residents who may require community information and referral support. The programme also added new multilingual collections for adults and children. The pilot project was launched with funding provided by Ontario's government.

Source: <http://www.simcoe.ca/CorporateCommunications/Pages/library-link-2016-01-05.aspx>

Moreover, in order to foster positive perceptions of cultural diversity resulting from immigration, local authorities can consider introducing competitions for awards among various public institutions, businesses, media or civil society institutions for their efforts or achievements in promoting diversity, tolerance and intercultural co-operation.

The **Utrecht Tolerance Prize** is dedicated to individuals or groups who have made interesting and positive efforts to promote tolerance in Utrecht's society and to increase mutual respect and understanding. The award was established in 1995 by Utrecht's city council and is ongoing. Every year, the municipality launches a call for candidates and disseminates this call to the broader public. The public may put forward different candidates and initiatives. A jury selects one and makes their proposal to the Mayor and Aldermen, who, in turn, accept or reject the nomination. The winner is supported with funds, which may only be used to continue the winner's good work.

Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/intrract/the-utrecht-tolerance-prize>



## COMBATting INTOLERANCE AND HATE CRIMES

The issue of migration has been highly politicized in many countries across the OSCE region. Local authorities should take firm steps to depoliticize migration. In some countries, authorities and parties have established pre-electoral accords, where all candidates running agree not to vilify migrant groups, on the grounds that such vilification harms the entire local community. Equally, informed and constructive public debate about migration-related issues is also valuable to address any fears or concerns regarding immigration, including worries about the strain put on public services that might result from significant migrant inflows.

Close co-operation with local media to ensure that the public receives clear information about migration and the steps taken by local authorities to ensure appropriate public services and public order, as well as to build a positive image of newcomers and create a welcoming climate for them, are essential to helping prevent antagonism between the host community and newcomers. Clear messaging helps to escape the “us vs. them” dynamic and avoid future conflict. Local media also have a crucial role in helping debunk myths and biases, as well as overcoming hostile narratives. Along with the media and social partners, local authorities can consider initiating public relations campaigns and media strategies to create a welcoming climate and reduce potential support for extremism and bias-based conflict.

Raising awareness among the police or other public order institutions on ethnic, religious and racial hatred and violence and the importance of building trust between migrant communities and the police is essential. It is also important to identify prejudice – or bias-motivated crimes and react to them as early as possible to build trust and prevent hate crime, hate speech or violence. Close co-operation among local authorities, the police, local media, NGOs, migrant associations and informal initiatives working on migrant integration, as well as on tolerance and non-discrimination more generally, is imperative.

It is important to react to bias-motivated incidents at the earliest stage possible. Serious violent unrest can be sparked by small incidents. Monitoring and reacting to hate crimes and hate speech, and quickly addressing such incidents (e.g., through statements from local politicians and leaders or immediately eliminating hateful graffiti) may help prevent escalation, as well as build trust within migrant communities. Migrants may often be afraid to report hate crimes and discrimination and reluctant to approach the authorities or police. To help them, an emphasis on community outreach and building trust is crucial, and local authorities can also consider encouraging reporting through the introduction of info-lines or smartphone apps, advertised in public places.

A task-force comprised of local authority representatives, the police, migrant rights organizations, possibly religious leaders or even sports fan clubs could be established to tackle ethnic/religious conflict at the earliest stage possible and to help prevent hate crimes and acts of discrimination. In general, the core message should be understood by the full range of those responsible and involved: Good inter-community relations benefit everyone and help ensure security and public order.

The **Barcelona municipal plan to combat Islamophobia** was developed by the city authorities in co-operation with human rights organizations and the local Muslim community in response to an increase in hate crime and speech against the city's Muslim population. It involves a series of measures that focus on raising awareness about this form of discrimination, monitoring hate speech and crimes, and guaranteeing the defence of rights. This is done by promoting an intercultural approach in Barcelona and reinforcing and co-ordinating the prosecution of Islamophobic discrimination. The plan includes campaigns and awareness-raising events, paying special attention to intersectionality in discrimination against Muslim women, educating and training municipal workers, police officers and schools and raising the visibility of existing diversity within the media and in municipal campaigns. This is done while intercultural and interreligious dialogue is promoted throughout the city, thanks in large part to the Office of Religious Affairs and the Barcelona Intercultural Programme's efforts. Finally, the Office for Non-Discrimination, as a municipal service, functions both as a human rights observer and as a complaints office where discrimination victims can be counselled, hate crime and speech can be reported and, if appropriate, public prosecution can be initiated.

Source: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/-/municipal-plan-to-combat-islamophobia>

## EMPOWERING MIGRANT CIVIL SOCIETY AND ENSURING PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES AND CITY GOVERNANCE

Civically and politically active migrants and migrant civil society organizations are very important agents within migrant integration processes. Local authorities have a role in mobilizing them, developing their capacities and skills and using their knowledge and expertise. Training migrant leaders and media on organization management and political participation, giving financial support to migrant organizations, including grant competitions and preferential rates for office space, providing meeting rooms and creating an enabling environment for co-operation between migrant organizations and other actors are ways of maximizing migrant civil society's role in integration.

It is also important to make sure that migrant civil society voices are heard and appreciated and to establish channels of regular information exchange and institutionalized contact. Consultative processes with local migrant organizations on local policies and migrant integration issues, needs and concerns can be ensured by creating a consultative body comprised of migrant population representatives within local administration structures. For example, the 1992 Council of Europe "Convention and Explanatory Report on the participation of foreigners in public life at the local level" outlines three types of consultative bodies: (1) participation by foreign residents' representatives in an advisory capacity in local authority committee deliberations; (2) consultative mixed-membership committees comprised of local authority members and foreign residents representatives; and (3) consultative councils with solely foreign members. Such bodies can be consulted on laws, policies and proposals and may have the formal right to initiate their own reports and recommendations, even when not consulted.

The **Reykjavík Multicultural Council** acts as an advisory board to the Municipal Human Rights Council and other city departments that deal with migration issues. It aims to engage immigrant communities and act as a bridge between migrants and Icelanders, advocate for multicultural communities' interests, and encourage the development of a harmonious multicultural society. The council consists of five members and five alternates. Two members are nominated by the City Council and the remaining three members and deputies are directly elected by participants of Reykjavík's multicultural assembly for a period of four years. The City Council elects the multicultural council's chair, but the multicultural council chooses its own vice-chair and engages in the Council's work in other areas.

Source: <http://reykjavik.is/radognefndir/fjolmenningarrad>

Migrant populations at large should also be actively encouraged to take part in consultation processes on local policy issues, e.g., by direct participation in open discussions, council meetings, online consultations and petitions. Information about these opportunities should be made available through channels of communication regularly used by migrants.

Some countries grant migrants active or passive voting rights. It is essential to promote relevant information about migrants' opportunities to vote and to be elected for public office. Such information should be promoted through local media outlets, including migrant media, through migrant organizations and in community centres. Local parties should also actively reach out to migrant candidates, particularly women who are often under-represented in political life.

In Finland, where migrants enjoy both passive and active voting rights, some political parties have their own branches for migrants. For example, the "**Kamut**" **National Migrant Coalition** from the "Kokoomus" National Coalition Party aims to participate in public debate and advocates building a more diverse and open-minded Finnish society.

Source: <http://www.kansallisetmaahanmuuttajat.fi/kamut/in-english/>

## REGULARLY MONITORING THE LOCAL CONTEXT FOR OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES RESULTING FROM MIGRATION FLOWS

Local authorities need to have a very clear idea about the number and characteristics of the migrant population in their areas to effectively design integration policies and the steps required for implementation. This is also vital in helping the various public institutions involved successfully adapt to migration and serve their increasingly diverse population. Statistical information on migration gathered nationwide may not necessarily be automatically shared with the local authorities. It is important to ensure access to relevant information collected by different institutions regarding migrant numbers, countries of origin, residence status, area of employment, and age and gender, as well as to collect missing information. When designing integration measures, it is worth remembering that migrant populations from the same country of origin may be very diverse internally (ethnicity, ideology, religion, education, occupation, age, etc.).

Effective integration measures should be based on needs analysis. Relevant information can be collected in various ways, ranging from comprehensive studies made in co-operation with research institutes to simple self-administered surveys done at places where there are large concentrations of foreigners, e.g., migration service offices, community religious and cultural centres, and employment offices. Information can also be collected from surveys administered online.

## ENSURING COMMUNICATION, CO-ORDINATION AND COLLABORATION AMONG STAKEHOLDERS

As migrant integration is so complex and multifaceted, various tasks associated with it are performed by different policy departments, local public institutions and civil society partners. It is crucial to ensure there is adequate information exchange among them in order to agree upon common goals and to streamline activities. Good practice can include the establishment of a co-ordinating person or unit responsible for information exchange who can facilitate co-operation on migrant integration issues among municipal departments and other partners involved in the process.

Wherever possible, a holistic approach should be taken to migrant integration at the local level. If local authorities are able to ground their planning in a comprehensive local integration strategy, based on needs assessment and gap analysis, as well as contributions from all relevant institutions, and to define a strategy that lists tasks, expected outcomes and bodies responsible for implementation, migrant integration efforts are more likely to be efficient and successful.

In Poland, the **Gdańsk Migrant Integration Model**, a comprehensive strategy covering all local policy areas relevant for migrant integration, was developed by a cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary task force. The team assessed available resources and capabilities to support migrants in Gdańsk, and identified key needs and problems. Initially, nearly 80 people representing 40 different institutions and organizations volunteered to work on the strategy. As the work progressed, new members joined the team. As a result, the Gdańsk migrant integration model is the result of a participatory process involving over 150 people representing 70 different public institutions and NGOs. It also included a group of 20 new residents of Gdańsk who come from different countries. The task force on the migrant integration model worked from May 2015 to March 2016.

Source: <https://www.gdansk.pl/download/2017-06/91579.pdf>

The voluntary sector is usually quick to react to immigration-related challenges, and migrants often self-organize into associations, self-help groups, students' associations, etc. It is important to view voluntary organizations and initiatives as potential partners with local authorities and not competition. Other non-governmental actors influencing the integration process may include businesses, trade unions, recruitment agencies, employer organizations and religious communities.

It is important to make the best use of the expertise and creativity of civil society organizations, support and co-ordinate their activities, create synergies, promote knowledge-sharing and the exchange of the most effective practices. One way to do this is to prepare a regularly updated database of all civil society projects and initiatives aimed at migrant integration. Systematic exchange of information can also be achieved through regular meetings, newsletters and consultation initiatives. An advisory board on migrant integration issues, comprising NGOs working on migrant integration issues, migrant community leaders, experts and academic scholars, can also be useful in helping local authorities better understand migrants' needs and design steps necessary for their integration. It is important that such a board not be just a token institution; it should have genuine influence on migrant integration policies. An umbrella organization uniting representatives from local authorities, relevant local public institutions and voluntary organizations can also have an important role to play in co-ordinating activities aimed at migrant integration and maximizing their effects.

Co-operation at the national and transnational levels is also a way of learning about good practices, as well as avoiding possible pitfalls on the road to migrant integration. Local authorities may engage with national and international policymakers to share their good practices and successful initiatives in order to replicate them in other local contexts and transfer them to broader national-level policies. It is possible to join existing networks, e.g., the Council of Europe Network of Intercultural Cities, or create new coalitions of the willing.

## **FINAL NOTE**

Acknowledging the key role of local authorities in informing and implementing migrant integration policies at a local and regional levels, ODIHR continues to work closely with local governments across the OSCE region to help them to effectively fulfill this role. For a more in-depth look at these issues, this publication can be read in conjunction with the ODIHR training manual *Good Practices in Migrant Integration*, which provides practical guidance for designing and transposing integration measures that meet OSCE commitments and international legal standards across multiple policy fields.



