

Thematic toolkit: Gender sensitive integration

Introduction

The IncluCities thematic toolkits offer practical, tested guidance and inspiration to help cities to reach **European standards in key areas of migrant integration**.

The toolkits are designed primarily for **local governments**, and are particularly **useful for smaller local administrations in Europe** and beyond, as well as for **partners** such as NGOs.

The content of these toolkits results from the crucial part of the IncluCities project, the benchmarking done by seven associations of local and regional governments and eight cities, with the support of the consultancy MigrationWork. These benchmarks helped to define a work programme for the mentoring schemes.

In each toolkit you will find an IncluCities thematic benchmark **drawn from a Europe-wide review of cities' experience in working on each of the four themes:**

- 1 Gender-sensitive integration
- 2 Building a 'city for all'
- 3 Labour market integration
- 4 Language learning support

The IncluCities benchmarks are qualitative standards for integration policies based on good practice and accepted standards from across Europe. They are good tools for self-assessment and goal-setting.

They consist of a set of **key factors** that define the critical conditions for success. Each key factor is illustrated with a section **why and how, and guiding questions**. Where relevant, the key factors were illustrated with good practice examples from the city or association acting as a "mentor" in the project.

Additional factors help to specify the context in which the city operates.

Conducting a strategic assessment of the needs of migrant residents and developing an appropriate, gender-sensitive response

- 1.** The needs assessment and response are co-produced with migrant women, men and young people **5**
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Rationale

Migrant populations are highly diverse, with a variety of cultural and economic assets, as well as a range of needs.

The characteristics of those populations and their needs may change rapidly and it is essential for a city to be able to assess them properly and ensure that services respond promptly.

A co-produced needs assessment should lead to actions that address the actual needs of migrants and contribute to social justice and community cohesion.

This benchmark, therefore, has a particular emphasis on the needs and assets of migrant women and girls. It aims to help in the identification of and closing of gaps between national, municipal and civil society-led efforts to support migrant integration and policy responses.

Context factors for this benchmark:

The following are a list of factors that can affect the ability of your city to meet the benchmark.

- The distribution of competences and relations across levels of government
- A national or regional policy framework for integration that is supportive of the city's integration goals
- The general economic situation, in particular the level of unemployment
- National discourses and debates about migration
- The degree of politicisation of migration in public discourse and political system, and position in the electoral cycle
- The availability of data on migrant and ethnic minority populations
- Migrant population structure (qualifications, demographics, forced migrants)
- The city council's budget and human resources available
- Awareness of gender equality issues and a gender approach in the city council and partner organisations



1

Key Factor

The needs assessment and response are co-produced with migrant women, men and young people



Why and how?

Co-production is when professionals co-design and co-deliver services with service-users and other members of target communities.

It has a range of benefits, such as: reaching target groups and drawing on their 'expertise by experience', which ensures that services are well designed to meet their needs, while fostering skills and encouraging civic participation.

For migrant women, it can reduce the influence of paternalistic attitudes, such as men speaking for them. Co-production of a needs assessment is also the way to ensure the needs are correctly assessed, including those of women who rarely express themselves on sensitive or trauma-focused issues, such as domestic violence and sexual exploitation.



Guiding questions

How are migrant women, men and young people:

- ✓ Included in the governance of the study e.g. in any steering committee?
- ✓ Involved in carrying out the study e.g. as "community researchers"?
- ✓ Included in the process of producing an action plan?
- ✓ Included in any monitoring & evaluation?



Good practice

[Schaerbeek's CAMIM project](#) puts new arrivals at the heart of a reflection process (IncluCities best practice)



2

Key Factor

A multi-stakeholder partnership steers the assessment



Why and how? Stakeholders steering the study should include representatives of all relevant services/ departments, particularly those related to the main integration challenges (education, employment, health care and housing)¹, as well as representatives of civil society organisations, local universities and migrants themselves.

Coproduction of knowledge can bring about innovation and increased quality. In order to do that, a network needs to be built, based on trust and reciprocity and a recognition of the contribution that all partners can make.



Guiding questions

- ✓ Has the city identified services that are most used by migrants, particularly migrant women, and invited them to join the partnership?
- ✓ Has the city identified services, which seem to be under-used given the characteristics of the migrant population, and invited them to join the partnership?
- ✓ Has the city mapped all key internal and external stakeholders?

1 EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion



3

Key Factor

The city has good connections with local migrant groups and networks



Why and how? Some cities have formal migrant councils or consultative forums.

If this is not the case, the city needs to identify local migrant groups and their networks and establish a trusted, working relationship, in order for the co-production approach to be effective.



Guiding questions

- ✓ Does the city have a migrant consultative forum?
- ✓ Have creative ways of engaging with migrant populations been identified?
- ✓ How can women be reached so that their voices are not mediated, particularly by men?
- ✓ How can undocumented migrant women and men be reached and engaged?
- ✓ Has a safe and respectful environment been cultivated to encourage participation?



Good practice

Brussels based NGO [Minderhedenforum](#) opened a branch in Antwerp and the city recognized the Forum as an independent organisation and voice for ethnic minorities.



4 Key Factor

The assessment adopts an asset-based approach



Why and how? The central idea in co-production is that people who use services are hidden resources, not drains on the system, and that no service that ignores this resource can be efficient.”²

An asset-based approach values the capacity, skills, knowledge, connections and potential in a community. Volunteers, including migrant volunteers, may be such hidden assets. Techniques, such as asset mapping may be used.



Guiding questions

- ✓ Is the needs analysis seeking to identify the assets that migrants bring and how they benefit the city, as well as their needs?

5 Key Factor

All available national, regional and local quantitative data are gathered and analysed



Why and how? The EU has an agreed set of indicators of integration, although not all Members States report against them systematically. But data are fragmented and gaps in knowledge remain, particularly at the local level.



Guiding questions

- ✓ Is there city-wide / regional data to help with both the design and monitoring of actions?
- ✓ If there are good data sources already available, do they include migrants' lived experience?

2 Boyle and Harris. 2009. The Challenge of Co-production. NEF and NESTA. P11.
<https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/the-challenge-of-co-production/>



6

Key Factor

A wide range of qualitative research methods are used



Why and how? A wide range of methods may be used to explore migrants' needs and assets, the barriers they face to accessing services, potential gaps and their strengths and weaknesses.

Possible methods for service providers and other stakeholders include online surveys, focus group discussions and interviews.

Community research, using participative methods can enable migrants, to share their experiences and views when visited at a convenient location and in their own language, if needed.



Guiding questions

- ✓ What research methods are appropriate for service providers and other stakeholders?
- ✓ Does the city have the time, resources and commitment to embark on community research?
- ✓ How can participative methods be adapted to the specific context of the city?

Examples of participative methods include:

- ✓ Mapping exercises (Where do migrants feel (un) safe? How well do they know the city?)
- ✓ Mind-maps of key services; problem trees (e.g. to describe challenges when arriving in the city and potential solutions)
- ✓ Asset maps (for individuals and communities)



7

Key Factor

A workable, multi-agency action plan is produced



Why and how? Actions may be identified for any of the stakeholders and should be specific and resourced, if needed.

Those aimed at migrant women and girls are likely to fall into three main areas:

1. Social Integration
2. Discrimination and rights
3. Help into work³

It is likely that actions to facilitate social integration and employment will need to be aligned with strategies and actions to tackle racism and racial discrimination.



Guiding questions

- ✓ Do the agreed actions correspond to the needs identified?
- ✓ Is the link between actions and desired outcomes clear?
- ✓ Are actions time-specific?
- ✓ Is it clear who is responsible for each action?
- ✓ Are resources available to fund actions, if needed?

3 Integration of migrant women. EWSI, 2018
<https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/feature/integration-of-migrant-women>



8

Key Factor

The implementation of agreed actions is monitored and evaluated, using a coproduction approach



Why and how? Evaluation is necessary for ensuring that the actions resulting from the needs assessment are being implemented effectively and services are improved through reflection.

Evaluation is part of establishing a culture of institutional learning, in which policies and services are adapted to best respond to local needs.

Involving external partners, local communities and migrants in monitoring and evaluation (resourced accordingly) increases the credibility of actions and can generate new ideas, bring new resources, and establish new methods of communication.



Guiding questions

- ✓ How does the city know it is achieving the objectives of actions that resulted from the needs assessment?
- ✓ Does the city have any way of independently monitoring the progress of its actions and what works and does not work?
- ✓ How frequently is that progress reviewed?
- ✓ Does it have a clear idea of the indicators of success of those actions?
- ✓ Are indicators meaningful to migrants themselves? Can they be jointly selected / tested (e.g. via focus groups...) with a range of community members?



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The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is the oldest and broadest European association of local and regional governments. Its members consist of more than 60 national associations of municipalities and regions from 40 European countries. Together, these associations represent some 100,000 local and regional governments. www.cemr.eu

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The **IncluCities** project (2020-2023) aims to improve integration of third-country nationals in middle-sized cities through city-to-city cooperation. Eight municipalities, with varying degrees of integration-related experience, and their national associations of local and regional government participate in the project, led by CEMR and funded by the EU (AMIF). www.Inclucities.eu



MigrationWork is a non-profit consultancy helping communities, practitioners and policy-makers to respond to migration in ways that move towards integration. MW has long-standing experience in organising mutual learning between local practitioners across Europe. Their Europe-wide work is independent, evidence-based and draws on a combined track record of working with migration processes, its policy context and its practical challenges. www.migrationwork.org



Main sources

- European Commission, ESF Technical Dossier No.4. Co-production: Enhancing the role of citizens in governance and service delivery, 2018
https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/filedepot_download/1145/1723
- European Commission, EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion, European Commission, Nov 2020.
https://ec.europa.eu/homeaffairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/pdf/action_plan_on_integration_and_inclusion_2021-2027.pdf

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