inclucities

Thematic toolkit: Building a 'city for all'

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.

Benchmark: How to build a vision of a 'city for all'

Rationale

Focussing on the initial stages of creating an inclusive culture, including building relationships and collaborations, getting 'buy in' and beginning to get people to articulate ways in which they would like the city to change.

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
- National or regional policy framework's supportiveness for integration of the city's integration goals
- Economic situation, unemployment
- Electoral cycles
- National discourses and debates about migration
- Degree of politicisation of migration in public discourse and political system
- Data availability
- Characteristics of migrant population (qualifications, demographics, forced migrants, legal status (e.g. undocumented), transit/settled intentions)

1

Key Factor
Get to know the local context by engaging citizens

Why and how? **Identifying needs**, demands, questions, **strengths**, weaknesses, bottlenecks, challenges is key to set priorities and detect partners, bridge figures and allies at the local level.

Involve citizens by implementing a structural and formal dialogue: formalise the informal encounters (a formal structure, recognised by the city council, with a clear mandate).

This **dialogue** can have **different forms and intensity** depending on the capacity of the municipality.

Guiding questions

✔ Are there interpreters available in case of language barriers?

✔ Which instruments are available at the municipality level to bridge the language gap?

✔ Do you have local advisory boards? Local participation forums?

✔ Do you cooperate with religious associations?

✔ Charity organisations?

✔ Do you cooperate with expert organisations regarding:
   - Social work?
   - Education? ...

✔ Are there initiatives from the bottom-up?

✔ Is there an active associative life?

✔ What does this associative life looks like?

✔ Sports clubs? Youth work? Youth movements?

✔ Entrepreneurs? Artists?

Good practice Mechelen - Interreligious/Inter-philosophical Platform: The project 'Start to believe' is a specific outcome from this platform.

2

Key Factor
Strengthen individuals and organisations who want to be actively involved and want to be (or potentially can be) an active partner of the city

Why and how? Ideally, the **city/municipality** is **a network** organisation, meaning that it does not always need to take the lead or be promotor.

The local government can stimulate, support and **facilitate initiatives from the bottom-up**.

In order to do this there should be a **(policy) framework and clear vision:** what will the local government support and what not? And why?

Citizens need to have, above all, **confidence** and they need to know about opportunities for funding, cooperation, support and the policy goals and priorities of the government.

This works in two ways, the city needs to know what is happening on the field and what ideas are out there. **First line streetworkers**, sports coaches, youth workers, and social workers are essential players and **antennas to identify these innovative ideas**.

Guiding questions
✔ What are the financial resources at the disposal of the local government?

✔ Are there organisations who can take up a supportive role towards ethnic-cultural organisations? (E.g. in Flanders, the 'federations' take up this role)

✔ Which first line workers are active in the field? (Stakeholder mapping)

Practical tips If the (financial) resources are limited, try to be creative: offer logistical support, e.g. making meeting rooms/material of the municipality available for external use or offer training or workshops.

Good practice examples Mechelen - Initiative Welcome in Mechelen Citizens voluntarily and with support of the city organise different activities for newcomers.

3 **Key Factor**
Build skills and understanding around inclusion and diversity across the municipality (internal HR policy)

Why and how? To create enthusiasm for an inclusive vision, people need to understand and know why it is important. This key factor is about building that internal support.

The **city/municipality** needs to **represent a diverse society** on all levels. Accessible recruitment and hiring procedures are important.

Walk the talk: It is essential to work on the attitude and mindset of employees to actually make the necessary changes in their day to day work. Approach diversity as an added value, not as something extra to do. In the beginning it implies extra investment but it will pay off in the long term.

Strengthen staff capacity for dealing with diversity issues, polarisation, racist and discriminatory statements.

Change, transition, and critical self-reflection is a slow, difficult and sensitive process. **Communicate** on a regular basis about diversity. Use a tailor-made approach.

Guiding questions
- ✔ What diversity or inclusion training happens already for workers in the municipality?
- ✔ Is this a requirement or optional?
- ✔ How far do HR policies and procedures reflect diversity principles?
- ✔ Do you have an internal communication platform?
- ✔ Does HR have a training policy for employers?

Good practice examples
Mechelen - Language policy and training regarding 'accessible' language use, Intercultural competence range
Celebration of international days (e.g. International Migrants Day) and awareness -raising activities for employees.

4 Key Factor
Networking and accessibility

Why and how? The **local government should support initiatives** and projects which bring citizens together and that stimulate intergroup contact and activate citizens to get out of their comfort zone.

Social networks are essential for new arrivals to speed up their secondary integration process, moreover one-on-one contact and support has the most impact, it accelerates the integration process.

Bridge figures, ambassadors, role models (volunteers, teachers, ethnic-cultural organisations,...) can **play an essential role** in welcoming newcomers and guiding them towards the regular services.

Guiding questions

✔ Does the municipality work with volunteers for specific events? What profile do these volunteers have?

✔ What opportunities are there for participation?

✔ Mentoring projects?

✔ Participation of newcomers?

✔ Does the municipality have statistics regarding the participation of newcomers in activities and events?

✔ Natural meeting points?

✔ Which public holidays are actively being celebrated (events) by the municipality at the local level?

✔ Which other activities (e. g. annually) or being organised by the municipality of the regional/ national government?

✔ How is the civic integration process organised? At the national/regional, local level?

Practical tips

- Try to mobilise people with a migration background
- Search for starting points with existing initiatives
- Invest in initiatives at district, neighbourhood and street level
- Use the capacity and strength of your own organisation (e.g. potential mentors/volunteers)
- An accessible and multi-use public domain can stimulate intergroup contact.

Good practice examples

Mechelen
Samen Inburgeren (2012) a buddy project, where newcomers and people from Mechelen do activities together, like cooking, writing a job application letter, picnicking in the park...

5 Key Factor
Working on imaging of citizens with migration background

Why and how?

Positive and connecting **stories** form the conditions that make positive social contact possible.

Social contact helps to reduce fears, stereotypes and distrust of others.

'Imagined contacts' can also make such fears and stereotypes disappear.

This is an important insight that demonstrates the importance of a **positive/ nuanced image** of religious and multicultural **diversity**.

Representation at all levels and domains in society is important: communication, HR, literature, culture, media, etc.

Pay attention to **diversity** in **content and image**. Focus on similarities. It is a reality, treat it like that and not as something exceptional or exotic or only related to specific events or international days, normalise it.

Be sensitive to the essence and importance of the use of **specific terms and words**.

Guiding questions

✔ Which communication channels are available to you? City magazine? Website? Other?

✔ How is your relationship with the local media?

✔ Is your communication service familiar with inclusive communication?

✔ Do you work with a focus- or feedback group to test your material?

Practical tips

- Use authentic and recognisable images
- Focus on similarities not on differences
- Avoid clichés and offensive messages
- Storytelling can be a very welcome communication strategy and methodology: tell personal stories that focus on connection.
- Test your material with your target group
- Be aware of polarisation – work out a communication strategy to counter this

Good practice examples

Mechelen
Project 'People make the city' - Mensen maken de stad (2014) was a storytelling project that translated residents' experiences into public content such as street art, podcasts, exhibitions, images and texts, building a more nuanced narrative around migrants.

The City of Capaci and the Associazione Italiana per il Consiglio dei Comuni e delle Regioni d'Europa (AICCRE), and the mentor City of Mechelen with the Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten (VVSG), contributed to the development of this thematic benchmark.

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

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 combined track record of working with migration processes, its policy context and its practical challenges. www.migrationwork.org

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