



EUROPEAN BOOKLET

PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES WITH NEWCOMERS AND DECISION-MAKERS/PRACTITIONERS IN 11 EUROPEAN TERRITORIES

2022-2023

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WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS BOOKLET

This document is divided into three parts:

This booklet starts with a short introduction to the EMBRACE project, its background context, some details about the methodology used in the Participatory process and the newcomers, decision-makers and practitioners involved.

In the second part, readers will find a brief analysis of the knowledge collected during the different phases of the Participatory Process, including all the themes and dimensions that emerged in the 11 territories. It intends to generally inform about the insights of newcomers regarding the relevant topics for them when thinking about their own integration. This analysis dialogues with European guidelines, by highlighting what's aligned with and what can complement the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021-2027).



The third part is focused on 6 main themes, selected according to criteria of (1) in how many territories they came up in, (2) to what extent, and (3) taking into consideration if solutions were co-created about them. Each theme is illustrated with newcomers' experiences, the main recommendations related and the respective possible solutions collaboratively created by newcomers, practitioners, and decision-makers.

The information is associated with the territories where it was most significant, so readers can be linked to each respective local booklet, to know and explore more. The texts were written using the information present in the local booklet, using, as much as possible, direct speech and quotes.

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND CONTEXT

The Participatory process used ComParte's methodology to involve newcomers in the decision-making process of topics that directly affect them and their integration into the country. This was accomplished through 3 main phases: Listening Sessions, Face-to-Face Meeting and Co-Projecting Workshops (*).

In 2022-2023, within the AMIF-funded project “Empowering Migrants to Be Representatives Actors in Community Engagement” (EMBRACE, 101038247-AMIF-2020-AG), this Participatory process was implemented, simultaneously, in 11 cities of 6 European countries (**).

This booklet compiles the knowledge collected during the Participatory Processes in the 11 territories where the EMBRACE project took place. It is intended to be a working tool for decision-makers and practitioners, using the lived experiences of newcomers, to make better-informed and efficient decisions when defining integration policies, aligned with the beneficiaries' real needs. It also aims to be a working tool that inspires to experiment, with different solutions co-created by newcomers and practitioners/decision-makers.



(*)



To know more about this process, consult the Toolkit for Active Migrant Participation

Listening Sessions - creative and participatory gatherings where newcomers openly share their integration experiences, offering recommendations for better integration processes.

Face-to-Face Meeting - informal moments that foster trust and proximity in which newcomers directly share their experiences and recommendations with decision-makers and practitioners, who actively listen and provide valuable feedback on their impact for their work.

Co-Projecting Workshops - collaborative moments, utilizing Participatory Policy Design methodology, that bring newcomers, practitioners and decision-makers together to foster collaboration and to collectively develop practical solutions that address challenges identified in Listening Sessions and Face-to-Face Meetings.

WHO ARE THE NEWCOMERS, PRACTITIONERS AND DECISION-MAKERS INVOLVED?

In the 11 territories where the EMBRACE's participatory process was implemented, were involved, in total (***):

- 194 Newcomers from 37 countries (Afghanistan, Albania, Argentina, Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, China, Congo, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, India, Iran, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Peru, Russia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey);
- 107 Practitioners and Decision-makers from the 11 territories.

(***) To know the information/details from each territory, consult the different Local Booklet - links on page 21.



PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES IN 11 EUROPEAN TERRITORIES

"ALL WE WANT IS TO BE INTEGRATED." (NEWCOMER)

Nowadays, around 34 million EU inhabitants were born outside the EU (around 8% of the EU population), and 10% of young people (15-34 years) born in the EU have at least one foreign-born parent. For sure, migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background play a key role in European society (Eurostat, Population data, 2019), but, in order to fulfil their potential and expectations, it's necessary to ensure their full integration and inclusion.

At this point, it's important to question what we are talking about when we're deciding or working over the topic of integration? The EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021-2027)(*) acknowledges the importance of building inclusive societies for all, including guidelines, incentives, orientation and proposals of measures and actions, with focus over the topics of inclusive education and training (involving language learning), employment opportunities and skills recognition, access to health or housing.

Newcomers involved in the participatory processes of the EMBRACE project, in the different territories, highlight significant themes for them, formulating recommendations, sustained by their experience, which are in close dialogue with and can add to the EU Action Plan.

(*) [EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion \(2021-2027\)](#)

Matches with EU Action Plan:

- Housing, employment, access to health and studying/professionalization are themes with strong emphasis, both brought by newcomers and the EU Action Plan;
- Focus on language learning, mental health, discrimination, the importance of political participation and access to housing with good conditions are subtopics that are in dialogue in the EU Action Plan and content risen by newcomers;
- Access to information and language are two strong themes mentioned by newcomers, however, to a bigger extent than what is mentioned in the EU Action Plan.

New information that complements and adds to the EU Action Plan

- While the EU Action Plan mentions the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships at every level to support integration, newcomers highlight the relevance of the relationships, both with practitioners and with the community;
- The topic of LGBTQI+ and discrimination against people with disabilities is brought by newcomers, and it can add on the EU Action Plan's references to the existing discrimination over gender/sexual orientation/disabilities;
- Newcomers add the importance of needing more personalized help during the first days of arrival and their desire of becoming autonomous when the programs end, which isn't something highlighted in the EU Action Plan.

RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS BY NEWCOMERS

“-----
:

- *Connect us with job opportunities directly. Do not just help us search for jobs online. Take us to places.*
- *Ask us how we can be useful and what we want to do. Look to our skills, don't focus only on what we do not have.*
- *Explain to us how we can get to university, even if it is a long way. Don't just tell us we have to work.*
- *It should be easier to verify the education documents.*
- *Promote mental health and social links.*
- *Hold organizations accountable for their treatment of newcomers (see more on page 9).*
- *Promote technology to increase participation (see more on page 17).*
- *Emphasize the significance of learning the local language, as not everyone understands it immediately (see more on page 12).*
- *Start housing cooperatives (see more on page 15).*
- *Explain to us our rights and the social norms (see more on page 6).*

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:

- *Create an individual path for autonomy.*
- *Use visible spokespeople within each community that people can turn to (see more on page 9).*
- *Show us LGBTI+ associations where we can feel welcome and meet people.*

Thinking and deciding about newcomers' integration is complex and holistic. As it's also mentioned in the EU Action Plan, it's important to recognize that themes can be, sometimes, related to others. This interconnection was also expressive in what emerged from this Participatory Process. For example, when newcomers talk about housing or language, the theme of discrimination also emerges. These intersections among themes are even more reinforced in the process of co-creating solutions, where, for example, some themes appear as "roots causes" of others.

In the next section of this booklet, although the themes appear to be segmented, these intersections are always present.

NEWCOMERS' INTEGRATION 6 MAIN THEMES

In the next pages, the reader is guided through a deeper view of the 6 themes that had greater emphasis when analysing the 11 local booklets. For each main theme, the reader will have access to:

- The main experiences shared in the territories where the theme emerged, through texts that combine testimonies from newcomers and seek to be as faithful as possible to their contributions;
- The main recommendations brought by them in these territories;
- The information generated in the co-projecting workshops, in which newcomers, practitioners and decision-makers participated: the summary of what came up as possible root causes for the problem and the agreed key features for creating a solution.

Each theme ends with an invitation to action, by presenting the solutions co-created in the different territories, directly quoted from what was formulated in the workshops.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, SERVICES AND BUREAUCRACY

WHAT DO THE NEWCOMERS' EXPERIENCES TELL US?

Sometimes, the solution to our problems is right next to us, but we have no idea. We want to be aware of the services that are offered and be able to deal with bureaucracy. At the daily life, we cross by different situations: for example, the need to understand our rights, how things work, how to apply for a job, how to get appointments in health centers, what's happening in the city we live in, if there are places that we can go to meet people and feel safe (like LGBT+ associations, the supermarket or local NGOs), what are the activities done at school, what parents need to do at school, among others. Also, obtaining or renewing documents can be a nightmare if we don't know about the necessary procedures.

Many times, the information that exists is not in our language and not even in English, so it gets impossible to plan things ahead and we can't manage our expectations. Having access to the necessary information and guidance in our language is key and, if we can't get it, we remain blocked and unable to take charge of our future.

The way we get information makes all the difference. It's important when professionals in the services are kind and honest, involve us in our integration process and take us to places (hospital, supermarket, etc). It also helps when we're fortunate enough to have a circle of friends that guides, protects and support us in navigating the system.

- Braga
- Est Ensemble
- Guimarães
- Ioannina
- Lisbon
- Maribor
- Mechelen
- Milan
- Palermo
- Prato



[EXPLORE MORE ABOUT
ACCESS TO INFORMATION,
SERVICES AND
BUREAUCRACY IN THE
LOCAL BOOKLETS OF THE
TERRITORIES ABOVE](#)
(Page 21)

“
It is very important to give new refugees information about refugee life here and how our life works here (about rights, the programs...). Just to know what will happen.
- Newcomer

WHAT DO NEWCOMERS RECOMMEND?

- Have representatives of each culture working in organizations. They can translate and explain in a way we can understand, and make organizations understand us. Most importantly, they know our culture, and they can connect with us through our feelings.
- Create bodies dedicated to informing newcomers in public institutions & multilingual information pamphlets.
- Involve us in the decisions that concern our life, like when choosing the city where we will live.
- Service providers and practitioners should be more transparent about what is and is not possible, so newcomers understand the situations they are faced with.
- Create buddy systems between newcomers.

WHAT DID NEWCOMERS AND DECISION-MAKERS/PRACTITIONERS FIND OUT TOGETHER, IN THE DIFFERENT TERRITORIES?



Taking into account what newcomers shared about this topic - Access to information, services and bureaucracy - when decision-makers/practitioners and newcomers got together in co-projecting workshops [in Milan, Prato, Maribor and Est Ensemble], they worked on finding out what could be the main root causes connected to these problems, that could give light to possible solutions.

Working on this, they found out that the base **ROOT CAUSES** are connected with:

- Language barriers (from both sides)
- Lack of cultural understanding of new cultures

- Non-adapted information materials
- Hosting system that is non-personalized
- Lack of coordination between services
- Lack of coordination among school-related services/bodies

- Lack of financial and human resources/means
- Lack of services and absence of institutions
- Lack of trained agents on how to welcome newcomers

- Inconsistencies in administrative procedures and interpretations of the law
- Complicated juridical framework

Based on the identified main root causes, in the different territories, the groups explored them with the focus of possible solutions. In that process, they identified different key features as important for the creation of solutions to the identified problem. Analysing what came up from these four territories, we can highlight the following **KEY FEATURES** for the possible solutions:

About information

- Mapping necessary information for people to access
- Digital platform for migrants
- Utilizing communication and technology
- Updated information on services and processes
- Open and accessible information for all

About Services

- Coordinating services
- Enhancing existing infrastructures in the city
- Inform parents about the school system and support them with documentation and procedures

Providing access to

- Employment opportunities
- Training
- Language classes
- Education
- Housing

Profiling

- Newcomers
- Newcomers' Skills
- Newcomers' Passions

About engaging community

- Facilitating matches between newcomers and local buddies
- Facilitating exchanges and immersions between newcomers and local actors in diverse sectors
- Organizing events to foster community engagement
- Newcomers as mentors and references for other newcomers

About Culture

- Promoting awareness efforts to reduce stereotypes
- Promoting culture and sports as avenues for integration
- Physical touchpoints (places) to facilitate social events

WHAT SOLUTIONS DID NEWCOMERS AND DECISION-MAKERS/PRACTITIONERS CO-CREATE?

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Milan

- Create a digital platform with physical touchpoints with the goal of improving and personalizing access to information in daily services for migrants that includes an accurate profiling process ("what you need and what you can give"), matches with local buddies, an updated map of the services present on the territory and physical touchpoint to create social event so that, people feel more oriented, involved and not alone.



Prato

66 - - - - -

- Create a pathway of exchange and mutual knowledge between school-related local bodies/services, with informational meetings, team building and organization of the subsequent pathway for teachers and parents, which includes the creation of 1) a guidebook on the school system and school and extra school services; 2) a calendar of training days for school managers and teachers; 3) a calendar of "Open days" to spread information and promote counters dedicated to supporting parents, so that, there will be an integration of services/bodies and awareness at every level (institutional, parental, school) of the school system in Prato.



Est Ensemble

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- The direction of participatory citizenship and neighborhood life will offer free training for newcomers: FINA (Formation d'Inclusion Nouveaux Arrivants). It permits them to be helped to feel integrated in society. It includes: Learning French, Workshops on self-confidence, Cultural and sports outings, Professional internships, Workshops on sharing experiences and knowledge, Sensibilization to living together, Exchanges of good practices for the valorisation of competencies, Psychologist/Health professional, Access to the library/médiatèque.

66 - - - - -



Prato

- Build a new Access Point for Newcomers offering not only information and support for administrative procedures but also orientation and assistance to access services which can eventually be organized in the form of counters in different parts of the city (and not just in the main Migration Office) and includes: qualified workers, networking and mapping of existing services, events between decision-makers and institutions or decision-makers and newcomers, so that, newcomers have orientation and assistance to access the services of the territory through a newly shaped working space, new front-desk offering orientation and follow-up and using new communication methodologies with the users to reduce the sense of disorientation in newcomers and foster participatory paths.



Maribor

66 - - - - -

- To collect signatures to address the most pressing issue: "Visa Documents": 1) Sign an appeal for the Administrative Unit, part of the national ministry, which handles the requests for documentation; 2) Explain the reasons for long waiting periods - another initiative was set up; 3) Form a Civil Initiative which has contacted the Office of the President of the Republic of Slovenia for support in reaching an international agreement between Kosovo and Slovenia; 4) Follow-up activities and set talks with policy-makers; 5) Continue to collect more signatures.

[EXPLORE MORE ABOUT THESE CO-CREATED SOLUTIONS IN THE LOCAL BOOKLETS OF THOSE TERRITORIES \(Page 21\)](#)



RELATIONAL AND COMMUNITY DIMENSIONS

NEWCOMERS - PRACTITIONERS/PROFESSIONALS - COMMUNITY

WHAT DO THE NEWCOMERS' EXPERIENCES TELL US?

With people, everything is better, and meeting the right people is very important. Especially when we arrive, we don't know anyone and we can feel lost or alone. It's good to have someone who welcomes us - someone helpful and who conveys security and serenity. It makes a difference when practitioners that work with us are available when we ask for help or when they try to know us, not just like newcomers, but like people.

Besides practitioners, we need to meet other people. Creating supportive and meaningful relationships with the local community allows us to be seen as individuals and as people, valuing our life paths and our projects.

We get more comfortable when we make friends, as they can explain things or even help us learn the language. It's essential that we have opportunities to socialize. It makes everything easier when we have a buddy, a point of reference or someone we can trust to listen to us, guide us and help us develop our skills and realize our dreams. We talk about buddies that are also other newcomers, or, as well, local people.

“
: *Now I am good here, I am liking the country. I am liking it because I have friends, and I have work. - Newcomer*

“
: *I first met my organization and they helped. When I need help, when I need to ask a question, they help and explain. - Newcomer*

- Braga
- Guimarães
- Ioannina
- Lisbon
- Mechelen
- Milan
- Prato



[EXPLORE MORE ABOUT ACCESS TO INFORMATION, SERVICES AND BUREAUCRACY IN THE LOCAL BOOKLETS OF THE TERRITORIES ABOVE](#)
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WHAT DO NEWCOMERS RECOMMEND?

- It is good when our social workers visit our house. It would be good to have visits (by them or other organizations).
- Create cosy, informal spaces where people can meet and come together.
- Decision-makers and service providers need more direct contact with newcomers to ameliorate understanding and communication between both parties.
- Train the people who are in contact with foreign users to be very patient and tactful, and provide a welcome point with kind and friendly people.
- More relationship-building opportunities between locals and newcomers are needed, especially in the social sphere.

WHAT DID NEWCOMERS AND DECISION-MAKERS/PRACTITIONERS FIND OUT TOGETHER, IN THE DIFFERENT TERRITORIES?

Newcomers, decision-makers and practitioners got together for a co-projecting workshop [in Est Ensemble, Guimarães and Ioannina] on topic related to Relational and Community dimensions: Newcomers - Practitioners/Professionals - Community. They went deeper on the possible root causes of this theme. Analysing what came out from this work, we got to the following main **ROOT CAUSES**:



- Lack of information about the country and social norms leading to psychological problems
- Stifled communication between different groups
- Language barriers
- Lack of time from practitioners to directly communicate to newcomers (being too busy with other tasks or lack of resources)
- Difficulty in knowing how to approach newcomers and locate them
- Lack of inclusive activities designed to facilitate newcomers' inclusion
- Insufficient training for agents on how to welcome newcomers
- Boundaries between newcomers and decision-makers prevent newcomers' involvement
- Need for practitioners to demonstrate genuine care
- Assistance from practitioners required in various aspects of life
- Requirement for an autonomy support system
- Lack of awareness regarding the efforts made to help newcomers
- Newcomer's feelings of uselessness, loneliness, disappointment and inferiority, compared to locals
- False expectations
- New culture and adjustment to new environments

Considering root causes identified above, in these three territories, the groups discussed them to imagine possible solutions, for which they pointed out different key features regarded as relevant for creating the final solution. This is the sum up of the **KEY FEATURES** that came up in the territories of Est Ensemble, Guimarães and Ioannina:

Informality and regularity

- Encouraging informal interactions to foster connections between people
- Establishing regular and ongoing initiatives to ensure continuous engagement

Communication

- Effective, open and accessible communication between different stakeholders
- Reaching and involving a wider audience
- Encouraging the sharing of problems, needs, and ideas among all members

Activities

- Facilitating discussions in small groups to encourage participation and engagement
- Providing access to employment opportunities, training, language classes, education, and housing
- Promoting efforts to reduce stereotypes
- Organizing events to promote community engagement and interaction
- Fostering cooperation and collaboration between NGOs, businesses, universities, municipalities and newcomers

Structure

- Equal representation of newcomers, decision-makers and practitioners
- Governing hierarchy with representatives from each group involved in decision-making processes
- Establishing a voluntary organization to foster community engagement and participation
- Ensuring meaningful inclusion of diverse newcomers within public institutions, including through staff involvement
- Empowering newcomers to serve as mentors and references for other newcomers, creating a support system

Cultural exchange

- Promoting interaction and integration without undermining or dissolving someone's culture
- Promoting a collective identity through branding efforts
- Encouraging cultural exchanges, including food, sports, and music

WHAT SOLUTIONS DID NEWCOMERS AND DECISION-MAKERS/PRACTITIONERS CO-CREATE?

“



Guimarães

Build informal monthly meetings called “Chatting”, in which newcomers, practitioners and local people come, meet in public spaces, eat food, have tea and coffee, listen to music and share. This is advertised on social media, filmed and recorded on the local radio. All of this, so that we can get to know each other.



“



Ioannina

Build a system and process to communicate between practitioners, decision-makers and newcomers which includes gathering the needs and difficulties of all participants and coming up with ideas for solutions so that everyone communicates together in a more humanising way.



“



Ioannina

Build a voluntary organization composed of newcomers and locals that promotes equal respect and responsibility which includes equally accessible: Greek language classes and intercultural events so that, through the raising of awareness and intercultural respect, service providers (and other Greeks) treat newcomers in a more humanizing way during their interactions.

“



Est Ensemble

Create a community of professional volunteers who are empowered through previous processes of inclusion. We want to help newcomers with integration and empowerment, assisting and giving them the most relevant information. Our goal is to make the process more simplified, reachable and less stressful for people who have gone through lots of challenges like you!



[EXPLORE MORE ABOUT THESE CO-CREATED SOLUTIONS IN THE LOCAL BOOKLETS OF THOSE TERRITORIES \(Page 21\)](#)



LANGUAGE

WHAT DO THE NEWCOMERS' EXPERIENCES TELL US?

Learning the local language makes all the difference, and it should happen during the first months, although it can be a very difficult task for us. Some of us learn faster while others need years to learn the language and, even if we get a certificate, it doesn't mean we can speak. It's important to have more language courses, kind and qualified teachers who can speak English and, more importantly, courses that are adjusted to our level or needs. It helps when classes are less formal, when we can speak and practice with our colleagues and when we focus on learning day-to-day vocabulary, instead of grammar or using the right punctuation.

Sometimes, we don't take part in language courses because we have other needs that are not solved yet, but we know it's important. Acquiring the language facilitates communication, opens doors to integration, education and job opportunities, and makes it easier to engage with the community and make meaningful connections, establishing a sense of belonging.

“
‘ ***The first months are to learn the language. To have good classes and a language course. I had classes of 3 hours. The most important in the beginning is to learn the language. - Newcomer***

“
‘ ***In the beginning, they gave me a questionnaire of 50-60 questions. I answered just 3. But still, they put me with 20 students that already knew the language. - Newcomer***

WHAT DO NEWCOMERS RECOMMEND?

- Have more language courses available. Many times, there are no courses or they are full.
- Language courses should be adapted to different levels of proficiency, backgrounds and language groups.
- Ensuring easy access to language classes and infrastructure to support participation.
- Don't teach us formal things, like punctuation; teach us words we need to use in our day-to-day life.
- The number of hours of free courses should at least double and the quality of free courses must be upgraded.
- Organize language courses within reception structures and emphasize the significance of learning the host country's language, as not everyone understands it immediately.

- Braga
- Guimarães
- Ioannina
- Lisbon
- Ljubljana
- Maribor
- Palermo



[EXPLORE MORE ABOUT
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WHAT DID NEWCOMERS AND DECISION-MAKERS/PRACTITIONERS FIND OUT TOGETHER, IN THE DIFFERENT TERRITORIES?



When working about this theme - Language - decision-makers/practitioners and newcomers got together during co-projecting workshops [in Ljubljana and Lisbon] and discussed what could be some of the root causes connected with the topic of language, that could help finding possible solutions. Together, newcomers, decision-makers and practitioners found that the **ROOT CAUSES** can be related to:

- Heterogeneous classes
- Classes with too many students and limited hours
- High illiteracy rates
- Lack of a common language among students

- Limited availability of free, flexible, and personalized courses
- Inadequate options for addressing specific newcomers' needs and interests
- Lack of diagnosis of the students' situation

- Conflicts between work/study and course schedules and demands
- Time and Availability/ Schedule incompatibility
- Challenges related to childcare and family responsibilities

- Certification and recognition issues for language skills
- Difficulty aligning language skills with job opportunities (need for more practical approaches)

After identifying the problem's root causes, in the different territories [Ljubljana and Lisbon], the groups started to explore possible solutions. When thinking about multiple solutions, newcomers, decision-makers and practitioners agreed on important **KEY FEATURES** to include in the final solution. Here are the main topics:

Approaches and Methodologies

- Trusting relationship between teachers and learners
- Sensitivity to refugee suffering and cultural differences
- Continuous evaluation and repetition of learning moments
- Real/practical day-to-day scenario training/teaching
- Teams of trainers and co-trainers (volunteers, migrant association members)
- Trainer-beneficiary interviews for diagnosis
- Creation of materials
- Development of language teaching modules
- Digital Interactive Platform
- Promotion of language courses and socio-cultural activities
- Holistic translation
- Personalized learning path
- Restructuring of language courses
- Individual conversations
- Adapted learning content for proficiency levels and language groups
- Personalized approach and support
- Smaller class sizes

Benefits

- Prevention of early drop-out
- Reduced time and cost for providers
- Intercultural exchange
- Community-building

Program Features

- Free for all
- Relies on volunteer recruitment
- Anywhere-based, not limited to formal settings
- Pairing with community members
- Learning opportunities outside class
- Free exams
- Non-compulsory participation
- Incentives for trainers
- Training of trainers with certificates
- Experimental phase
- Marketplace/platform for matching trainers and learners

WHAT SOLUTIONS DID NEWCOMERS AND DECISION-MAKERS/PRACTITIONERS CO-CREATE?



Lisbon

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.....
Create a local network involving different stakeholders (migrants and refugees, and public and private entities operating in this field) to:

- 1) create a platform with self-diagnostic functions, for the dissemination of language courses and socio-cultural activities, translated into several languages, always up to date, which issues alerts of available courses according to needs;
- 2) rethink the structure of courses according to the needs of migrants and refugees living in the territory;
- 3) create an articulated and integrated offer of training and socio-cultural activities to effectively meet the needs of migrants and refugees.



Lisbon

“

.....
Create a process for a participatory creation of a course with Thematic Modules of Language learning, which include different methods to learn, so that, newcomers, acquire consistent autonomy.

[Modules: Health; Socialization; Transportation; Psychomotricity; among others]

[Methods: study visits; podcasts; informal classroom moments; role-play; sharing]



Ljubljana

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.....
Slovenian language courses should be free, of high quality and continue without interruptions. They should also be longer. Providers should be qualified to teach newcomers and have experience working in intercultural environments. Groups should be small so that teachers can devote maximum attention to the participants. When forming groups, newcomers' prior knowledge of the Slovenian language and the language group of their mother tongue should be considered.



[EXPLORE MORE ABOUT THESE CO-CREATED SOLUTIONS IN THE LOCAL BOOKLETS OF THOSE TERRITORIES \(Page 21\)](#)



HOUSING

WHAT DO THE NEWCOMERS' EXPERIENCES TELL US?

One of our biggest problems is renting a house and that's one of the things that worries us the most. After our program ends, we need to know if we will be able to get a house. Sometimes, we wait a long time for it and, even if we get one, many of us live in bad conditions, as rents are really high and we don't earn enough money.

Often, landlords want guarantors and our work contracts might be too short, are finishing or we don't have them. It gets even more difficult if we have to hide that we are foreigners, when speaking to a potential landlord or if we don't get an official renting contract.

When we finally manage to move from the reception center to a house, it's important to find the basics inside it, like furniture and cooking equipment. It is hard when we have no clothes, money, or something to cook with, and we might need support during this phase. For example, it helps to have someone kind, polite, and honest showing us the house for the first time.

“
I am a part of the beneficiaries of the project that allows me to have a house. I feel at home. My happiness has no dimension when I feel I will have a house in this country that will be mine. - Newcomer

“
Refugees should have the right to access social housing, not just citizens.
Rent subsidies for people with international protection should be prolonged to two years or until people manage to find employment. There is no use for refugee status if you are homeless and without an income. - Newcomer

- Braga
- Lisbon
- Ljubljana



[EXPLORE MORE ABOUT ACCESS TO INFORMATION, SERVICES AND BUREAUCRACY IN THE LOCAL BOOKLETS OF THE TERRITORIES ABOVE](#)
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WHAT DO NEWCOMERS RECOMMEND?

- The house given to us should be furnished and preferably with equipment in good condition, like food and the material necessary for us to cook.
- It is important that the person who welcomes us to the house and shows it is polite.
- Expand the capacities of existing integration houses and build new ones.
- Prolong the time that you can stay there, especially for vulnerable people.

WHAT DID NEWCOMERS AND DECISION-MAKERS/PRACTITIONERS FIND OUT TOGETHER, IN THE DIFFERENT TERRITORIES?

During the co-projecting workshops held in Braga and Palermo, decision-makers, practitioners and newcomers came together to explore possible causes for the problem of housing. The **ROOT CAUSES** encompassed the following aspects:



- Newcomers' limited resources and/or insufficient documentation (ID or proof of income)
- Unemployment or unstable employment opportunities
- Lack of informal networks that may help to find a house

- Discrimination faced during the processes (based on ethnicity, nationality or immigration status)
- Limited access to information about housing rights, laws and processes

Then, when brainstorming about solutions, the groups agreed on different **KEY FEATURES**, summed up here:

Strategies

- Fiscal benefits and rental incentives for landlords
- Simplify processes and prioritize criteria
- Prompt assistance upon arrival with translations and easy access
- Shared housing to fight isolation
- Use abandoned buildings
- Newcomers represented on the political sector where this decision are made

Approaches

- Fun and engaging
- Interactive diagnosis and support (like Q&A) through informal networks
- Interaction between newcomers-landlords
- Solidarity with locals
- Campaigns with information to landlords and renters
- Campaigns about Cultural aspects and prejudices

WHAT SOLUTIONS DID NEWCOMERS AND DECISION-MAKERS/PRACTITIONERS CO-CREATE?



Form a collaborative team comprising individuals from various institutions. Our goal is to examine the issue of housing access and work closely with both institutions and people from diverse migrant communities in Palermo. Through this joint effort, we aim to foster integration and address housing challenges effectively.



Palermo



Create a working group, that includes people from several institutions, to identify isolated persons (like elders) that are willing to share their houses with migrants for promoting integration and mitigating housing problems in Braga.



Braga



Create a physical point in Braga, that offers 1) information 2) technical support 3) the creation of links with local communities for refugees who're looking for a house in Braga. There are two types of workers in this place: 1) refugees with experience in the system, and 2) Portuguese people with specialized knowledge of the housing topic, voluntary or employed. The information is passed informally, accessible, and designed according to the needs of each person. So that refugees can find a home in a simplified and informal way.



Braga



[EXPLORE MORE ABOUT THESE CO-CREATED SOLUTIONS IN THE LOCAL BOOKLETS OF THOSE TERRITORIES \(Page 21\)](#)



PARTICIPATION

WHAT DO THE NEWCOMERS' EXPERIENCES TELL US?

It's important for us to be recognized as citizens rather than guests, and to have opportunities to contribute to society. Sometimes, we feel that we don't have the right to share our ideas, as we think they won't be appreciated because we're newcomers. It's good when we feel legitimate to participate, and it helps when there are planned participatory structures and initiatives that promote our voices and experiences. It really makes a difference when people hear our words directly, instead of hearing other people speaking in our name.

We have things to say and different needs from each other. When meetings happen, for example, in reception centers, it's usually a good experience and an opportunity to talk and be listened to. Sharing all the information is important, builds relationships and even makes us trust the social workers more. Creating inclusive environments that value diversity and actively involve newcomers in decision-making processes is crucial to our successful integration!

- Est Ensemble
- Lisbon
- Prato



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**“.....
Give us the chance to organize a national conference to hear directly from
refugees or migrants what they need and what they face to address it,
instead of listening to other people speak in our place.” - Newcomer**

WHAT DO NEWCOMERS RECOMMEND?

- There should be **regular meetings** to talk about problems (for example, in the Reception Center).
- During the meetings, the staff members should be actively listening to what we have to say.
- Going beyond 'tokenistic' approaches of participation and taking newcomers' ideas and interests seriously.
- Make information and knowledge about what democratic life and participation mean and how it works more accessible and clear to all.
- Encourage and promote **co-listening processes** & create platforms/spaces of exchange regularly between newcomers and decision-makers at the local and EU level, as well as target newcomers who have an interest in participating.
- Structuring participation moments through methods that enable people to participate, promoting them more actively, clarifying the objective, usefulness and subsequent actions, ensuring continuity in meetings and highlighting the political/authority figure behind the organization of these events.
- Bear in mind that newcomers can **represent everyone** and not just specific communities by feeling part of the territory and voicing their own concerns, as well as those of others.

WHAT DID NEWCOMERS AND DECISION-MAKERS/PRACTITIONERS FIND OUT TOGETHER, IN THE DIFFERENT TERRITORIES?

In Est Ensemble and Prato's co-projecting workshops, newcomers, practitioners and decision-makers discussed the problem of participation to find its possible causes. The designated **ROOT CAUSES** were mainly:



- Language, legal and resources constraints
- Lack of community network and lack of awareness, that leads to discrimination
- Basic needs limits newcomers' participation
- Gender obstacles for women due to childcare duties and others

- Cultural adaptation challenges
- Lack of inclusive activities
- Difficulties in approaching newcomers
- Lack of effective participation and listening processes

After defining possible root causes for the problem of participation, when creating solutions, newcomers, decision-makers and practitioners, together, formulated different **KEY FEATURES** for the solutions that passed by:

Place and its organization

- Welcoming Informal environment
- All the information in one place, accessible and using technology
- Self-managed place by the people involved
- Place with a significant role in the daily lives of newcomers
- Dedicated childcare spaces
- Spaces/times just for women

Create Opportunities

- Inclusion of newcomers within public institutions
- Reduce stereotypes and promote cultural exchange
- Build newcomers' networks through events
- Facilitate exchanges and immersions between newcomers and local actors in various sectors
- Provide access to opportunities that could be barriers to participation (employment, language learning, etc)

WHAT SOLUTIONS DID NEWCOMERS AND DECISION MAKERS/PRACTITIONERS CO-CREATE?

“



Prato

- Create a centre called 'Embrace Civic Centre', coordinated by the public service and managed by the Embrace group. It includes a multipurpose space where people meet, plan and engage in activities. The centre will include 1) a time bank for individuals to contribute their time; 2) a space for children; 3) a bulletin board for exchanging goods and services; 4) a service orientation map; 5) a language classroom for language courses; 6) a bookable meeting room available for listening sessions between citizens and the local administration, so that, people will feel included and actively participate within a place with a universal language, where we have interconnected resources.



“



Est Ensemble

- Create a service dedicated to the inclusion/integration of newcomers in the local life and decision-making processes. This new service will put into place tools for communication, networking and community animation through a newcomer council, an intercultural space, a forum, outings and activities, immersion days and participation in local city councils. Thanks to this, newcomers will become local actors in the life of the municipality which will enhance the feeling of cohesion/living together through tolerance and acceptance, and promote citizenship and humanity.



[EXPLORE MORE ABOUT THESE CO-CREATED SOLUTIONS IN THE LOCAL BOOKLETS OF THOSE TERRITORIES \(Page 21\)](#)



STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION

WHAT DO THE NEWCOMERS' EXPERIENCES TELL US?

As newcomers, when we arrive in a new country, we face a different culture and different people, with different behaviour. We often experience discrimination and stigma due to our ethnicity, religion, or language, and those episodes, sometimes, are visible in some organizations, integration processes and paper works. When it comes to discrimination, it can also be based on gender, sexual orientation, or against people with disabilities.

For example, to be transgender involves specific challenges and it's not easy to find safe places to be and live in, as not everyone is ready to understand and accept us. Likewise, discrimination against people with disabilities is also very real, but being a disabled person doesn't mean the same as being unable, and, with the right facilities, we can do almost anything by ourselves.

- Est Ensemble
- Lisbon
- Prato



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“.....

: We should avoid differentiation between the newcomers, especially between the refugees, or every person that leaves their country. There shouldn't be any favoritism, Ukrainians, Afghans, Somalians, Syrians, we have to look at them with the same eyes, we have to welcome them with a warm heart. - Newcomer

“.....

: I normally prefer not to live with other people, I prefer to live alone, but it is quite difficult. (...) Few people accept my situation. Few people accept trans people." - Newcomer

WHAT DO NEWCOMERS RECOMMEND?

- Punish any discrimination about religions, ethnicities, colors, languages, etc.
- Promote exchanges between neighbors.
- Get feedback by the target group itself regarding the accessibility of public places: a group of experienced experts (citizens with a disability).
- Show us LGBTI+ associations where we can feel welcome and meet people.
Take us there for the first time, as going alone can be scary if we are shy.
- Avoid differentiation between newcomers from different countries.

WHAT DID NEWCOMERS AND DECISION-MAKERS/PRACTITIONERS FIND OUT TOGETHER, IN THE DIFFERENT TERRITORIES?

During the co-projecting workshops, decision-makers, practitioners and newcomers in Maribor and Mechelen came together to explore possible causes for the problem of stigma and discrimination. The **ROOT CAUSES** founded take into account the following aspects:



- Lack of awareness about the earnestness of the inclusion issue for newcomers
- Lack of accessibility during public city events to ensure the participation of all individuals, including newcomers
- Infrastructure in public spaces that don't allow independent and barrier-free movement

- Lack of investment in the active participation of newcomers with disabilities in city policies and decision-making processes
- Lack of opportunities for meaningful participation of newcomers in shaping and influencing city policies and initiatives.

Starting to explore possible solutions, newcomers, decision-makers and practitioners agreed on important **KEY FEATURES** to include in the final solution:

Visibility, Awareness

- Make the inclusion theme visible in the public sphere through signage, symbols and inclusive design elements
- Conduct experiential workshops and awareness campaigns

Opportunities and Contexts

- Platform to collect citizen inputs
- Foster active participation and collaboration between the government and citizens, including individuals with disabilities, to ensure inclusive decision-making processes
- Ensure diversity within the advisory network
- Take simple and cost-effective measures to make changes that enhance inclusion for citizens with disabilities

WHAT SOLUTIONS DID NEWCOMERS AND DECISION-MAKERS/PRACTITIONERS CO-CREATE?

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Maribor

Create collectively a story with different characters, to present newcomers' side of the story, addressing the stereotypes we are facing and explaining why this is happening. Also, to present the challenges faced.



“-----”



Mechelen

Facilitate a network of experienced experts for making Mechelen more accessible for people with disabilities. These experienced experts are citizens of Mechelen who have a disability themselves and who want to put their time and energy, voluntarily, into giving feedback based on their own experiences as a person with a disability about the accessibility of Mechelen. This way, Stad Mechelen can listen to their opinions as a starting point for what should be done differently in terms of accessibility, as well as taking into account their feedback about new upcoming (infrastructural) changes in the public city areas, public events, etc.



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Thank you!

Thank you to all the newcomers who shared their experiences and recommendations, and to all decision-makers and practitioners who were involved in the Participatory Process of EMBRACE.

To the reader, we propose the challenge of giving us feedback, to identify what you consider to be most inspiring and useful.

Any thoughts you want to share?

Did you implement some solutions?

Did this booklet inform your work/a project?

We look forward to hearing your feedback through this [form](#).



To go deeper into the Newcomers' experiences, recommendations and the co-created solutions, consult the [Local Booklet](#) from each territory:





Embrace

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GLOCALFACTORY



PLACE



MECHELEN



ZRC SAZU