

Factsheet of Good Practice

Thematic Study Visits for Migrant Integration



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SHAPE

SHaring Actions for Participation
and Empowerment of migrant
communities and Las

“Thematic Study Visits for Migrant Integration”

Fostering Migrant Integration through Study Visits: Empowering Communities and Local Authorities in Europe

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Background information

Title	Thematic Study Visits for Migrant Integration
Geographic area	Portugal
City	Porto and Lousada
Organisation	Municipality of Lousada and Rightchallenge Associação
Contact person or organisation	Rightchallenge Associação
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Start Date	01/2022
End Date	12/2023

Summary

The Thematic Study Visits for Migrant Integration in Porto and Lousada, Portugal, aimed to enhance the capacity of migrants and local authorities to develop successful integration policies, share best practices, and strengthen European partnerships. The visits included interactions with organisations such as the National Support Centre for Migrant Integration (CNAIM), Jesuit Refugee Services Portugal, local companies, and the Consultative Council for Interculturalism. Participants included local authorities, project managers, migrants, and refugees from Germany, Hungary, Croatia, Italy, and Portugal.

Goals

The visits were a mean to fostering the engagement of individuals with a migration background and civil society organizations (CSOs) representing migrants in democratic processes and the development and execution of integration policies at the local, national, and community levels within migrant communities.

In particular, they sought to achieve the following objectives:

- Enhance integration policies and facilitate dialogue between local authorities and migrant communities.
- Bring together citizens with a migratory background, local authorities and policy-makers aimed at triggering a participatory process at the local level, while at the same time creating a structured and formalised method of consultation for local policies in different fields;
- Promote awareness among citizens in Italy, Hungary, Croatia, Germany, and Portugal regarding the valuable contributions made by migrant communities to European Union (EU) societies.

How does it work?

The initiative involved visits to key organizations and institutions involved in migrant integration:



[National Support Centre for Migrant Integration](#) (CNAIM): CNAIM were created in 2004 in order to respond to the challenges felt by migrants in their process of integration in Portugal. The Portuguese High Commission for the Migrations (ACM) created the centres to gather, in the same space, different services, institutions and Cabinets of Support to migrants. Participants learned about CNAIM's diverse services and cabinets, language support, and integration efforts and had a Q&A session with the center's direction where had the opportunity to ask questions and share their experience with their local cabinets and migrant integration services.

[Jesuit Refugee Services Portugal](#): In Portugal, JRS was established in 1992 and since then has been supporting migrants and refugees by providing them social, psychological, medical, and legal support. The visit to JRS





Portugal was in their Porto headquarters and was hosted by the Municipal and Intercultural Mediator at JRS Portugal in partnership with City Council of Porto and a psychotherapist at JRS Portugal. Globally, the discussion was led by migrant participants and was an opportunity to benefit from their expertise, understanding, and knowledge. Migrant participants raised a discussion regarding the receptivity and willingness of refugees, especially Muslim and African refugees to psychotherapy and how to promote their openness to psychological support. JRS shared their approach of developing a deep psychoeducation process. For participants the best way is to respect refugees' cultural beliefs and rituals, and informed that the best way is to integrate family, religious and cultural leaders in the psychotherapy process to develop their trust.



Worst Tours: The Worst Tours started as an informal group of three architects in 2012. The Tours are walking debates on the differences between Porto's centre and periphery, real state abandonment and speculation, gentrification and *museification*, the similarities and differences with other cities and places in Europe, and their solutions to these issues. On the activity there was also a focus on Portuguese colonialism and its modern-day ramifications.



Advisory Council for Interculturalism (CCI): A visit to the Consultative Council for Interculturalism, highlighting art-based integration efforts and intercultural initiatives. The objective of the CCI is to stimulate and promote exhibitions, colloquiums, lectures, workshops, artistic expressions of public art, singing, music, cinema, thematic fairs, among others, with the aim of including and disseminating cultures from different countries in the city of Porto.



Results

The practice resulted in several positive outcomes. It enhanced participants' understanding of migrant integration policies and strategies, facilitated the exchange of knowledge among participants from different countries, provided insights into innovative approaches to psychosocial support and cultural integration, and fostered collaboration and networking among local authorities and organizations.

Overall, the Study Visit counted with 23 participants (local authorities, project managers and migrants) from Germany, Hungary, Croatia, and Italy.

Table 1. Description of participants

Organisation	Role	Country
City of Zagreb	Senior associate for the promotion of human rights	Croatia
Jesuit Refugee Service Croatia	Social worker and project officer	Croatia
Jesuit Refugee Service Croatia	Migrant Participant	Croatia
Jesuit Refugee Service Croatia	Migrant Participant	Croatia
Open University of Zagreb	Head of the Department for Adult Rducation	Croatia
City of Stuttgart	Deputy Director Department for Integration	Germany
City of Stuttgart	Member of the International Committee, City of Stuttgart	Germany
International Committee, City of Stuttgart	Member of the International Committee, City of Stuttgart	Germany

LAKA Baden-Württemberg	Managing director	Germany
LAKA Baden-Württemberg	Migrant Participant	Germany
LAKA Baden-Württemberg	Migrant Participant	Germany
LAKA Baden-Württemberg	Migrant Participant	Germany
Artemisszió Foundation	Program Manager	Hungary
Artemisszió Foundation	Migrant Participant	Hungary
Artemisszió Foundation	Migrant Participant	Hungary
Artemisszió Foundation	Migrant Participant	Hungary
Artemisszió Foundation	Migrant Participant	Hungary
JKN Zrt. Kesztyűgyár Community Center	Director	Hungary
Józsefváros Municipality in Budapest's 8th district	Deputy mayor	Hungary
Comune di Bologna	Communal Consigliere	Italy
CONNGi	Migrant Participant	Italy
Futuro è ora - CONNGi	Member of the association and Migrant Participant	Italy
Pwealth Foundation- CONNGi	Member of the association and Migrant Participant	Italy

Evaluation

While the practice was highly beneficial, it was noted that some participants found the diverse visits tiring, highlighting the need for free time and flexible schedules in future initiatives. Challenges included the need for effective communication with ethnic minority communities and empowering marginalized groups.

Overall, it was decided to visit spaces, offices and structures that respond to different needs and challenges faced by migrant citizens in Portugal, being: Mental health; Employment; Social Inclusion and Participation; Housing and Cultural Representation and Expression. This intersectional approach was much appreciated by participants that considered the visits an exceptionally rewarding and enriching experience. The group interacted with great ease and harmony which provided unique moments for knowledge sharing and the exchange of good practices.

Who benefits?

The main beneficiaries of this initiative encompass migrants and refugees, as well as local authorities and professionals working in migrant associations. Additionally, the secondary beneficiaries encompass ethnic minority communities and vulnerable groups within the targeted communities.

Source of funding and resources used

The practice received funding from the European Commission through the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund under the “SHAPE: SHaring Actions for Participation and Empowerment of migrant communities and LAs” Project. No additional external funding was used.

Replicability

This practice is transferable to other contexts with similar integration challenges. Conditions for successful replication include institutional support, funding, and a commitment to intercultural collaboration. While it was not mentioned above, the

practice was also implemented in different contexts, namely, in Germany and in Italy what enhances its replicability.

Insights gained

Key lessons learned include the importance of inclusive approaches, psychosocial support, and cultural sensitivity in migrant integration. Insights gained include the value of involving cultural and community leaders in integration efforts and the power of art-based initiatives in promoting intercultural understanding.

Furthermore, local authorities from the City of Bologna and Stuttgart had presented their insights to their colleagues and are, as of September of 2023, implementing part of the activities developed in their municipalities and local councils.